
The MCAA Advisory

The Newsletter of Medal Collectors of America

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Calendar for 2010

August 12th Club meeting 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. at
Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.
Anne Bentley and John Adams to speak.

What's New on Our Website!

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE EVERY MONTH

From the Editor

With this issue, we exercise our editorial prerogative and include a flyer on our new book: *Medallic Portraits of Admiral Vernon/Medals Sometimes Lie*. Modesty aside, the book is a milestone, with the last publication (in English) on the subject having occurred in 1945. The flyer describes the contents of the book quite well. We would only add that our aim was not to publish the last word on the subject but, quite the opposite, to provide a firm foundation upon which collectors and students of the Vernon medals can now build.

Our August meeting at the Massachusetts Historical Society is one that you will not want to miss. Anne Bentley has done an heroic job of pulling together material for a visual feast:

MHS gearing up for August exhibition...

We've planned nine sections for our exhibition, "*Precious Metals: From Au to Zn*", scheduled to open on Monday, August 2nd and run through September 11th. While eight cases will feature medals—our primary collecting interest—the ninth will focus on our colonial coins and paper money. The other sections will cover the Ship *Columbia* medal; the *Comitia Americana* Washington-Webster set; a large display of Betts pieces (including Indian Peace medals) and an extra case on Admiral Vernon, to tie into John W. Adams's forthcoming publication on that series. We haven't forgotten what Storer called "Personal medals," and we have a case of school medals and other tokens. Our section on awards and badges will cover medical and military history, and William Sumner Appleton's *Washingtoniana* will complete the display.

"Precious Metals: From Au to Zn" August 2-September 11, 2010

Massachusetts Historical Society, 1154
Boylston Street, Boston.

Public hours 1-4 P.M. Monday through Saturday.

*Additional A.N.A. hours 9 A.M to Noon,
Tuesday August 10-Saturday August 14.*

If you are anywhere in New England and miss this gathering, you should consider another line of work.

Betts 76 (by David Fanning)

In the April issue, David contributed a brilliant article on Betts 76, a medal far less known to numismatists than Betts 75. In a fit of torpidity, we neglected to include the images accompanying the article. We make up for our omission herewith.

Captions

Figure 1 — A large-size copper Betts-75 medal, the size and type which saw distribution to Native Americans. This is the 75.5 mm specimen recently sold as part of the John W. Adams collection (photo courtesy of Stack's Rare Coins, New York City).





Figure 2 — The 1686 dated Betts-76 French Family Medal. This is a 41.4 mm specimen recently sold as part of the John W. Adams collection, now in the collection of the author (photo courtesy of Stack's Rare Coins, New York City).



Figure 3 — Betts-76 as depicted in the 1702 edition of *Médailles sur les principaux événements du règne de Louis le Grand, avec des explications historiques*.



What is a Medal? (by Stephen K. Scher)

In the world of modern and contemporary art, this is certainly a relevant and vexing question and one that has occupied the Saltus Award Standing Committee of the American Numismatic Society for many years. This award, as you may already know, is, in its full title, the J. Sanford Saltus Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Art of the Medal and has been given, almost annually, since 1919, during which time the parameters of the medium has changed considerably. As chair of this committee I have led the often-contentious discussions regarding the exact definition of a medal, since almost all traditional elements have been rejected or expanded by contemporary medalists. Anyone who has attended a FIDEM (Fédération Internationale de la Médaille d'Art) Congress over the past decade or so has encountered a bewildering array of objects called medals, and has quite understandably questioned exactly what is a medal, since many of the works appear to be small sculptures with no features that would normally be associated with a medal.

Since it was and is the charge of the Saltus Committee to identify outstanding medalists, we have, in our meetings, usually been confronted with the necessity of answering the question posed by John Sallay. In an attempt either to provide an answer or stimulate discussion during Committee meetings, at one point I proposed the following definition, wishing, in doing so, to avoid imposing any restrictions upon an art form that had evolved so drastically and yet insisting that some sort of definition was necessary:

“For some considerable amount of time there has been much discussion and controversy regarding the definition of a medal in the contemporary context. As part of its guidelines the Saltus Committee has established the following parameters:

“In consideration of the medallic production of any given artist, the shape,

material, the presence or not of a portrait, the presence or not of a reverse, and, for the most part, size, cannot in and of themselves be considered as important limiting factors, since many examples from the past that have historically been accepted as medals do not necessarily encompass all, or a major part, of these factors. The one overriding condition that would usually seem to distinguish the medal from the plaquette, the relief sculpture, and small sculpture, itself, is the generally commemorative nature of the medal. This usually, but not always, means that a legend or inscription is part of the composition.

“We understand that there are many exceptions to this description, and we have every intention of applying our parameters with flexibility, but we also feel that such a description will enable us to select with greater ease and a clearer direction an artist who fulfills the original description of the award for “distinguished achievement in the art of the medal,” considering the wide range of objects that are currently described as “medals.”

There you have it! Not ideal, but at least something to work with.

One member of Committee, the distinguished numismatist and medal scholar, Philip Attwood, in his editorial notice in the autumn, 2007 issue of *The Medal*, entitled “The Boundaries of the Medal,” begins with the following paragraph:

“The question of how to define the medal so often results in an answer that satisfies no one that it is tempting to conclude that it is the question that must be wrong. Framing the discussion in terms of the characteristics towards which medals tend is perhaps a more profitable way forward. Circular, two-sided, combining image and text, fitting within the hand, manufactured in metal, produced in editions. These are all familiar features, and anyone with a practical agenda – the organizer of a medal competition or exhibition or the commissioner of a medal – may well feel it necessary to make hard and fast decisions in some of these particular areas.

But what of the rest of us, when we are not organizing competitions and exhibitions or commissioning medals? Can the rest of the world perhaps afford to take a more relaxed view?"

I think we have all agreed that "a more relaxed view" is necessary, but if we are too relaxed, we end up with no definition and the possibility that anything could be called a medal. That, at least, might lead a greatly increased membership of the MCA.

The Edict of Fontainebleau

(by Skyler Liechty)

Huguenots, who were the members of the Protestant Reformed Church of France or French Calvinists, were all too familiar with religious discrimination and persecution during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth century by the French Catholics. This harassment would be the root cause of many conflicts. On the first of March 1562 in Wassy, France, two hundred Huguenot worshipers and citizens were slaughtered by troops of Francis, Duke of Guise. This began a series of conflicts known as the French Wars of Religion. Interestingly enough, this conflict also included a minor dispute between the French aristocratic houses of Bourbon and Guise.

The series of wars that began with the Massacre of Wassy would conclude thirty-six years later with the issuing of the Edict of Nantes by Henry IV. This formally established Catholicism as the state religion and, at the same time, assured the Huguenots that they would receive equal rights. Toleration of the Huguenots was Royal as opposed to popular policy and they would remain generally unmolested for the remainder of Henry IV's reign and also under the reign of Louis XIII. However the Huguenots lost protection under Louis XIV when, in October 1685, he issued the Edict of Fontainebleau more commonly known as the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. With persecution re-intensifying there

would be a mass emigration of the Huguenots into England, the United Provinces, Switzerland, Brandenburg-Prussia, Denmark, the Habsburg's Holy Roman Empire, South Africa and North America seeking religious asylum.



From etching entitled "Le massacre fait à Wassy le premier jour de mars 1562." Source: www.wikipedia.com

Prior to the Edict of Fontainebleau, the Huguenots had tolerated more than four hundred proclamations, edicts, and declarations attacking their civil freedom and their property. A mere four years prior to this edict, Louis XIV had implemented a policy referred to as *Dragonnades*, a course of action that involved billeting particularly obnoxious and difficult soldiers, known as dragoons within Protestant households, with the expectation that the intimidation factor would be strong enough to persuade Huguenot families to either leave France or convert to Roman Catholicism. Madame de Maintenon, the second wife of Louis, is believed to have been an advocate of the greater restrictions on the Huguenots. While she was opposed to the cruelties of the *Dragonnades*, the conversions they procured were a welcomed result. Moreover orders were given by Louis XIV to destroy the Huguenot churches and close all the Protestant schools. Emigration estimates range from two hundred thousand to upwards of nine hundred thousand in the two decades that followed the edict. On January 17th 1686, Louis XIV himself claimed that only one thousand to one thousand five

hundred from a population of eight to nine hundred thousand Huguenots had remained in France after his Edict.



Protestant engraving representing 'les dragonnades' in France under Louis XIV. Source: www.wikipedia.com

One of the enduring consequences to France from this Edict was the loss of a large population of skilled craftsmen. Huguenots had substantial knowledge in working with silk, plate glass and silver and were heavily involved in cabinet making. Upon leaving France, all the knowledge of important techniques and styles left with them, causing a tremendous decline in the quality of French produced goods. Not only did England, the United Provinces, and the Habsburg's Holy Roman Empire benefit from the skills brought by the Huguenots, but the America colonies did as well.

Huguenot immigration was experienced in many of the American colonies after the Edict. After the destruction of the Protestant churches at Rochelle in 1685, a product of the Edict, colonists from that city came to the settlements in the colony of New York. The L' Amoreaux family set sail for the American colonies and landed at New Rochelle in Westchester county, New York, as early as 1685. Several other of the Huguenot families that settled in New Rochelle were part of the

group escaping. In 1686, a number of Huguenot merchants and manufacturers arrived at Charleston and, having the means, established commercial houses there. Certain expatriates who went to South Carolina were natives of the important town of Vitre that was located in the northeastern part of the province of Bretagne. Evidence also suggests that about a hundred and fifty families had settled in Massachusetts, with some moving as far north as Maine. Some Huguenots would take a less direct path to the colonies: they would first escape to England or Ireland from where they would embark for the West Indies and British North America. Mounting pressure from Louis XIV in the French controlled islands in the Caribbean would also result in flight to the colonies in America. In July 1686, application was made by families lately arrived from St. Christopher's for admission to the colony of Boston.

Descendants of these Huguenots included people such as Stephen Etienne Delancey. He escaped the persecution by fleeing to Rotterdam, then to England in the first few months of 1686, then to the colonies in June 1686. He was a member for the Province of New York Provincial Assembly and State Senator and was a major figure in the life of colonial New York. One of his son's became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court for the Province of New York and the other served in the New York Provincial Assembly for several years. Pierre Baudouin fled to Ireland, then to Portland, Maine, finally settling in Boston and was the grandfather of James Bowdoin. James Bowdoin was an American political and intellectual leader from Boston during the American Revolution. He served in both branches of the Massachusetts General Court and was president of the state's constitutional convention. After independence he was governor of Massachusetts. The list goes on and on of significant Huguenot immigrants and families that greatly contributed to America. The contributions of

skills and labor brought into colonial America would have a long lasting impact. Jean-Paul Divo lists two medals struck to commemorate this event in his book *Medalilles de Louis XIV*, being numbers 209 and 210. This reverse die pictured below is unlisted. It is signed by Henri Roussel with an R on the obverse and H. ROVSSEL on the reverse by. On the obverse is a bust of Louis XIV the legend LVDOVICVS MAGNVS REX CHRISTIANISS (Louis the most excellent Christian King). Louis XIV, known as le Roi Soleil (the Sun King), was King of France and of Navarre. He reigned the longest of any other documented European Monarch, ruling from 1643 until 1715. France stood as the leading European power during his reign and was engaged in three major wars: the Franco-Dutch War, the War of the League of Augsburg, and the War of the Spanish Succession.

On the reverse is a woman, holding a crucifix in one hand and a book on the other standing on a prostrate body. In the background, the building is possibly the *Église du Dôme*, which was commissioned by Louis XIV as a private royal chapel. Interestingly this is where the tomb of Napoleon resides. Reverse legend HAERESIS EXTINCTA (the heresy expelled). This is the same legend as Divo 209.

In exergue EDICTVM OCTOBERIS M DC LXXXV (the Edict of October 1685). This particular medal is exceedingly rare. I am aware of a single example of this medal in silver.



Whether or not the medals struck to commemorate this event should belong to the American series is a question best answered by the individual collector. As for me, I believe it to be a great addition to any colonial American medal cabinet.

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Connoisseurship and Collecting

(Lev Tsitrin)

A few years ago I listened to a panel discussion headed by the New York Times book review editor. The main grievance of authors whose books have been reviewed, he informed the audience, is that the reviewer does not take the trouble to read the book he is reviewing, and so misses its point entirely.

For the life of me I cannot recall now how he extricated himself and proved that the authors' perception was wrong and that the reviewers did their job diligently and conscientiously -- but it was that remark that came to my mind as I read Dr. Scher's rebuttal of my attempt to differentiate between connoisseurship and aesthetics. "How could he say that I denigrate connoisseurship when I clearly said nothing of a kind?" I asked myself. (And I am sure that Dr. Scher, whose reaction was clearly triggered by what he saw as my misunderstanding -- or misrepresentation -- of his remark that connoisseurship helps point to those examples of a particular medal that most adequately represent the artist's intentions, no doubt felt a similar grievance:" How come Lev could so misunderstand what I so clearly stated?")

Since, as per the august authority of the above-mentioned NY Times editor, such grievances as mine towards Dr. Scher, and Dr. Scher's towards me are universal and hence routine, I will not go through a point-by-point rebuttal of what Dr. Scher said I said. Instead, let me say that I completely agree with Dr. Scher on the importance of connoisseurship -- yet, at the same time, let us be clear about its scope and its role in collecting.

This role is best illustrated by a practical example of the use of connoisseurship. At this January's Waldorf-Astoria convention, a European dealer had several trays of thoroughly unappealing (to me) aftercasts of well-known Renaissance medals -- but placed among them was a very nice, sharply-defined portrait medal of a lady that

immediately attracted my attention. The label described it as a good cast, and it was priced accordingly – yet, as I reached to examine it closer, it felt too heavy, so I looked closely at the edge, and sure enough there was RR stamped into it. I pointed this out to the seller, expecting him to change his description (and the price) in accordance with the fact that this was not a cast but a Ready electrotpe -- but he insisted that because he bought it in a auction that described it as a cast, it was, insofar as he was concerned, a cast, described and priced correctly. My appeals to him to use his own eyes -- or his connoisseurship, if you will -- were in vain. Needless to say, I did not buy the piece.

Therein lies one value of connoisseurship -- by letting us know what exactly it is that the dealer is selling, connoisseurship prevents us from falling into traps and buying what the object is not. It tells us whether the price is inflated, or fair, or is in fact a bargain, be it, to use Dr. Scher's example, \$50,000 for an iconic piece in a superb original cast and pristine condition, or \$500 for the decent aftercast of the same.

That's the function of connoisseurship in a nutshell -- and the limit of what it can do for a collector. Once the true nature of the object is established, it is of no further use. Can it tell the collector whether to buy that \$500 piece or not? A \$100 one? No, that's simply not its call. Here, an entirely different set of considerations comes into play. While it prevents the collector from being swindled into buying, say, an electrotpe touted as a superb cast, or a late aftercast claimed to be a fine original, it has nothing at all to say about the aesthetics of the piece.

Yet it is aesthetics that, in the final analysis, are all-important. After all, medals are interesting only insofar as they please the eye and/or tease the mind -- and pieces that fail the connoisseurship's test of "fineness" may well do both -- and for that matter, may do both very well indeed. Emotions cannot be measured in monetary terms of course, but I would argue

that one can very easily get \$50,000 worth of aesthetic pleasure from a \$500 piece for, in purely aesthetic terms, the difference between a \$500 and a \$50,000 piece may not be that great.

And even in the context of the artist's intentions, consideration for which we are debating here, aesthetics plays a leading part. A Rembrandt's print taken from a worn-out plate has but little monetary value not because it can be shown, when compared to a superb impression, to misrepresent artist's intention. It is of little worth commercially because, without being compared to anything at all, it is of no worth aesthetically. It just doesn't look good. Likewise, the reason a superb impression is expensive is not because it fully represents Rembrandt's artistic intentions, but because it is aesthetically exciting. There certainly are variations in that -- at a print fair a dozen or so years ago a dealer had two virtually indistinguishable impressions of a Rembrandt prints shown side-by-side -- one priced at forty thousand dollars, the other at "only" half that much -- but the difference in the impressions, although it could be explained in the terms of printmaking technicalities (i.e. in the terms of "connoisseurship"), was, upon closer examination, clearly reflected in aesthetics; the more expensive one quite simply looked better. Neither the connoisseurship nor the respect for Rembrandt's "artistic intentions" were in play here (neither of the two appeared to be a posthumous impression, so Rembrandt must have approved of both) -- aesthetics alone was.

And then, there is one aspect of medallic connoisseurship where it not just contradicts, but collides head-on with the respect for artistic intentions. Dr. Scher mentioned "indifferent patina" as one of the aspects of the medal that tells a connoisseur to snub a particular piece. But let's think for a minute. Patina may help determine the age of the piece, but it is in total violation of the artist's intentions. The medal left his hands new -- with a patina of a brand-new piece. Yet it passed into a collector's hands old -- looking totally different from when the artist handled it

and gave it what he thought was "proper" patination. To be logical, a collector, out of the respect for the artist's intention, should have the old patina removed, and a new one applied. But to do that, would be to do violence to the prime evidence that the piece is old! It would mean destroying the most foundational factual basis for connoisseurship! By making sure that one preserves the evidence that the medal was indeed made by an original artist, one has to keep it in a physical form that is definitely different from that envisioned and created by the original artist – and one does it precisely out of respect for that artist's "artistic intentions!" I am really sorry to say it, but it looks to me as if a connoisseur, too, does not care that much about "artist's intentions."

And then, there is one other observation made by Dr. Scher that I find hard to agree with, or to square with his respect for artistic intention: the claim that only the first cast from the original model is properly the "original" but that other examples are something else. Doesn't the very nature of the genre require that medals be produced in quantity? Isn't that the patron's demand? Isn't that what an artist has to keep in mind when accepting the commission? Isn't production of multiples an "artistic intention?" Isn't that what makes medals "the currency of fame?" How come then that only one piece that he produced is properly the original, but not all of them?

The bottom line, I think, is this -- connoisseurship plays a vital role in collecting, but it is a secondary one. Collecting is guided by curiosity and aesthetics; connoisseurship is merely a handrail that prevents a collector from making false steps as he moves along the path of satisfying his love of beauty and his intellectual curiosity.

Letters to Editor

Dear Claudia Einecke,

It was so good to have the telephone conversation with you the other day, and I hope that my request hasn't stumped you.

Just to repeat a little;- I belong to a relatively new (about 2 years) organization, The Medal Collectors of America (MCA), whose president, Mr. John Adams, of Boston, Massachusetts, asked me to get information on the medals collection at LACMA., and that information would then be made available to members of MCA, and, presumably, to other interested individuals, although any such arrangements would, of course, need to be planned and approved beforehand with you and/or others at LACMA.. So, may I suggest that I call you shortly (please send me your direct phone no. at LACMA) so we can then chat and arrange for us to get together, at your convenience, at LACMA. Incidentally, MCA has a web page at medalcollectors.org – in case you'd like to learn more about the organization.

Just as an aside: I have been excited since a couple days ago, when I put into Google something like "Medals of people in the medical and related natural sciences" (I don't remember the exact words), and received a document from a university in New Zealand that listed a set of medals in their collection that corresponds very closely with mine, and, of course, I'll try to get in touch with them and exchange notes.

I look forward to hearing from you, and meanwhile send my best wishes.

Ralph Sonnenschein
Tel. (310) 454-0808

[Ralph is trying to procure the contents of the collection that Kahlil Gibran donated to LACMA—Ed.]

Hi John,

Just got the latest issue of the advisory with the search for a volunteer re. the 4x4x9 boxes. I would be happy to take care of storage. I have a few empty offices here, and a staff that would be able to take care of the shipping of orders. Let me know how to proceed.

Dale

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[We applaud Dale's willingness to volunteer. We are currently testing a second box used by Anne Bentley in her work at the MHS. When we have a proposal to make, we will get back to the Board the membership, and particularly Dale. Ed.]

Dear Mr. Adams,

I am doing some research on my ancestor Elias Boudinot, and it appears that Benjamin Franklin sent him a Libertas Americana medal. I am wondering if there is documentation that Franklin did indeed give Boudinot one of these medals, and if so, can we ascertain the current disposition of the medal? Is it in public or private hands? As Boudinot was the president of the Continental Congress at the time, it looks like he was given one of the silver Libertas Americana medals. Any help you could help me in tracking down this information would be most appreciated.

Best regards,

David Boudinot

P.S. I was given your email by Mr. Alan M. Stahl, Curator of Numismatics at Princeton University.

Good morning,

Mr. B - If you go on the Internet to the Papers of Benjamin Franklin, you will find an extensive correspondence between the two men. In his letter of June 18th, 1783, to Franklin, Boudinot expresses his thanks for two medals. He reports that he gave the copper specimen to Livingston which, by inference, means that he kept a silver medal for himself. It is highly unlikely that the provenance of this medal has survived. If it is not at Princeton, you might check the old Philadelphia institutions such as the Philosophical Society, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and The Library Company. Good luck !

John Adams

Dear John,

Kudos to you and to the authors of the two principal articles in the particularly fine April issue of The MCA Advisory.

I strongly second your views on the ill-advised slabbing and numerical grading of Admiral Vernon medals, a most unwelcome practice that seems to have metastasized into various areas of numismatics where it really doesn't belong.

Best regards,

Dick Margolis

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Home):
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What are your collecting interests?

What would you see highlighted in MCA publications?

QUESTIONNAIRE

How did you learn about the MCA?

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3115 Nestling Pine Court
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Or email completed form to: bdtayman@verizon.net
MCA WEBSITE: <http://www.medalcollectors.org>